DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 476 485 CE 084 949

TITLE	Adult and Community Education: An Overview. Australian Vocational Education and Training Statistics, 2001.
INSTITUTION	Australian National Training Authority, Melbourne.
ISBN	ISBN-1-74096-138-2
PUB DATE	2003-00-00
NOTE	13p.
AVAILABLE FROM	National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 252 Kensington Road, Leabrook, South Australia 5068, Australia (Cat. no. 942; free). Tel: 08 8333 8400; Fax: 08 8331 9211; e-mail: vet_req@ncver.edu.au; Web site: http://www.ncver.edu.au. For full text: http://www.ncver.edu.au/ statistics/aaq/ace2001/ace01.pdf.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses (070) -- Numerical/Quantitative Data (110)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS
DESCRIPTORS	*Adult Education; Age Differences; *Community Education; Course Selection (Students); Developed Nations; Enrollment Trends; Females; Foreign Countries; *Rural Areas; Rural Education; Sex Differences; *Student Characteristics; *Urban Areas; Urban Education; *Vocational Education
IDENTIFIERS	*Australia

ABSTRACT

In 2001, around 1,200 of 6,700 providers in the Australian public vocational education and training (VET) system delivered adult and community education (ACE) programs, which attracted 497,500 people. ACE programs accounted for 20.7 million hours of training and 972,500 subject enrolments. Vocational ACE programs accounted for 238,700 students, and non-vocational programs for 279,200. Women represented 70 percent of all ACE students, while in VET women represented less than half of all students. The proportion of females was especially large in non-vocational ACE programs, where they made up 74 percent. Over 76 percent of all ACE students were 25 years of age or older. Almost 70 percent of all ACE students resided in a capital city or other metropolitan area, which is slightly lower than the 72 percent of all Australian population living in these areas. Only 3 percent of ACE students, compared to 11 percent of VET students, undertook training while still attending secondary school. Over 30 percent of all annual hours undertaken by ACE students were associated with subject-only enrolments (i.e. no course). Almost 63 percent of ACE enrolments were in subjects that are not assessed. (YLB)

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Australian vocational education and training statistics 2001

Adult and community education

ED 476 485

An overview

Highlights for 2001

- In 2001, around 1 200 of 6 700 providers in the public VET system delivered Adult and Community Education (ACE) programs, which attracted 497 500 people.
- ACE programs accounted for 20.7 million hours of training and 972 500 subject enrolments.
- Vocational ACE programs accounted for 238 700 students, and non-vocational programs for 279 200.
- Women represented 70% of all ACE students.
- Over 76% of all ACE students were 25 years of age or older.
- Almost 70% of all ACE students resided in a capital city or other metropolitan area, which is slightly lower than the 72% of all Australian population living in these areas.
- Only 3% of ACE students undertook training while still attending secondary school.
- Over 30% of all annual hours undertaken by ACE students were associated with subject-only enrolments (i.e. no course).
- Almost 63% of ACE enrolments were in subjects that are not assessed.

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1 Scope and definitions

Adult and community education (ACE) in Australia encompasses a great variety of vocational and non-vocational programs delivered by a range of training providers, community-based/managed organisations, and sometimes by volunteers.

Official and working definitions of what constitutes ACE vary among states and territories and major ACE stakeholders. Views on the definition of ACE range from education, training and related services provided exclusively by community-based and community-managed organisations to all post-compulsory training and education that contributes to the process of lifelong learning.

In this publication ACE is defined as:

- ◇ all educational and training activity (i.e. vocational and non-vocational) which is delivered by community-based or community-managed organisations that provide learning opportunities for adults
- ◇ non-vocational educational and training activity which is delivered by TAFE institutes and other VET providers.

This overview reports only on ACE activity delivered by providers who are part of the public VET system. In 2001, around 1 200 of 6 700 providers in the public VET system delivered ACE education and training programs to 497 500 people.

2 Training programs

In this publication, a distinction is made between two types of ACE programs, according to their curricular intent:

- ◇ *Vocational*, i.e. programs that have a vocational focus and are designed to equip students with specific skills.
- ◇ *Non-vocational*, i.e. programs that are primarily directed at the overall personal, cultural and social development of an individual.

Vocational ACE programs, which in 2001 accounted for almost half of all ACE students and almost 70% of ACE annual hours, are designed to:

- ◇ develop specific vocational skills
- ◇ impart knowledge required in specific employment contexts
- ◇ prepare students for entering vocational programs through providing general skills in literacy, communication, language, etc.

Additionally, within vocational ACE, students can undertake either formal or informal training. Formal vocational programs normally lead to a qualification recognised under the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF), while informal programs do not result in a recognised qualification. In 2001, of the 238 700 students enrolled in vocational ACE programs, over 70% undertook informal training. Some of these students, however, undertook both types of programs.

Non-vocational programs are designed to impart skills traditionally associated with recreational or personal enrichment activities. In 2001, non-vocational ACE sector attracted more than half of all ACE students but accounted for less than one third of all ACE annual hours.

Non-vocational ACE programs described in this publication are delivered by:

- ◇ community training providers, which in 2001 delivered the bulk of non-vocational ACE activity and accounted for almost 80% of students and annual hours
- ◇ TAFE and other government providers, which accounted for the remainder.

Table 1: ACE students, subject enrolments and annual hours by program type, 2001

	Vocational	Non-vocational	All ACE
Students	238,700	279,200	497,500
Subject enrolments	563,900	408,600	972,500
Annual hours	14,440,800	6,254,000	20,694,800

3 Recent trends

Between 2000 and 2001, the number of students enrolled in ACE programs increased by 4%, from 477 800 to 497 500. This growth was mainly due to the increase in the number of students enrolled in non-vocational programs.

The amount of training undertaken by all ACE students remained essentially unchanged over this period, at over 20 million annual hours. However, students in non-vocational programs undertook less training in 2001 than they did in 2000.

Table 2: ACE students and annual hours by program type ('000), 2000 and 2001

	2000	2001
ACE students*	477.8	497.5
Vocational ACE programs	*237.9*	*238.7*
Non-vocational ACE programs	*259.7*	*279.2*
ACE hours	20,837.1	20,694.8
Vocational ACE programs	*14,309.3*	*14,440.8*
Non-vocational ACE programs	*6,527.9*	*6,254.0*

* Note: The number of students in different ACE programs does not sum to the total because some students may be enrolled in several ACE programs at one time.

4 ACE student characteristics

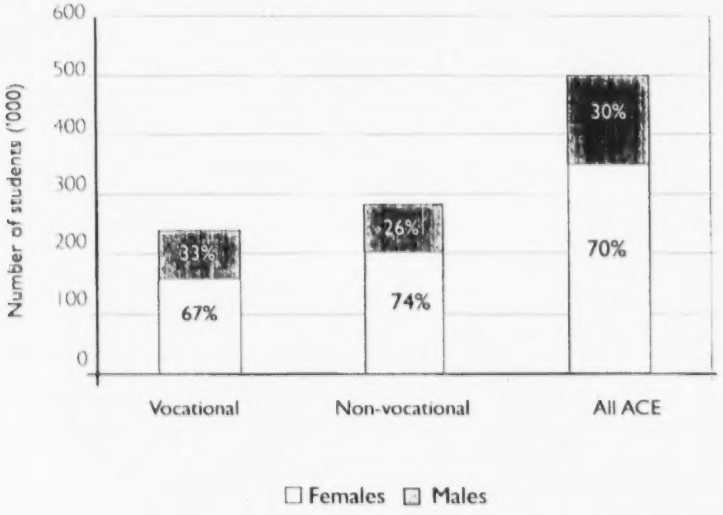
In 2001, as noted earlier, there were 497 500 students undertaking ACE in the public VET system. Of these students, 238 700 people were enrolled in vocational programs and 279 200 in non-vocational programs.

4.1 Sex and age

ACE programs attract men and women of all ages. However, on average, ACE students are more likely to be female and older than the overall VET student population. In 2001:

- ◇ Approximately 70% of ACE students were women, while in VET women represented less than half of all students.
- ◇ The proportion of females was especially large in non-vocational ACE programs, where they made up 74% of students.

Figure 1: ACE students by sex and program type, 2001[1]



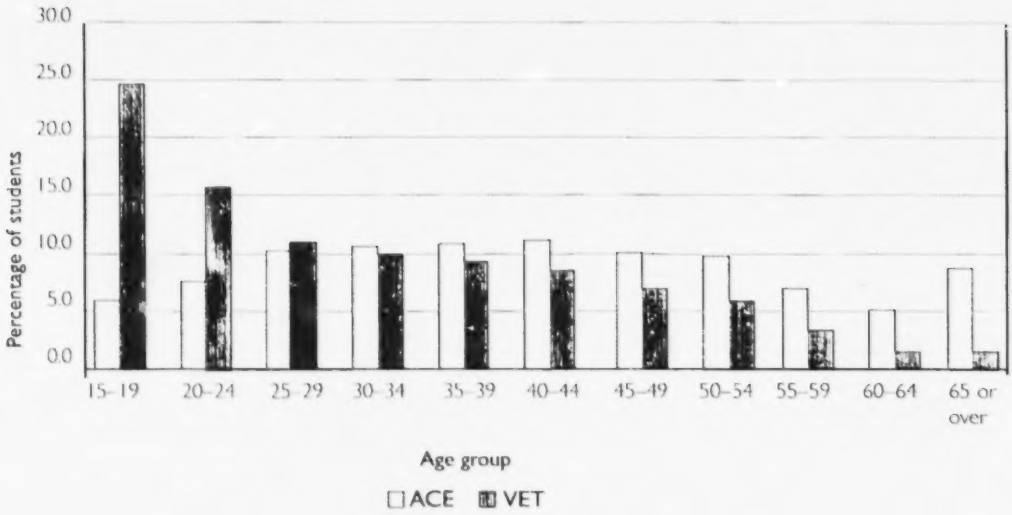
The age profile of ACE student population is characterised by a strong participation of mature age people and a very flat and broad age distribution. This contrasts with VET, where a pronounced peak can be observed at around the age of 18–19 years.

In 2001:

- ◇ Young people (15–19 years) represented only 6% of ACE students, in contrast to VET where they accounted for almost a quarter of all students (figure 2).
- ◇ In ACE, people 20–24 years old made up around 8% of all students, compared to almost 16% in VET.
- ◇ People 45 to 54 years old represented over 20% of all ACE students, compared to 13% in VET.
- ◇ Older people (55 years and over) accounted for almost 22% of students in ACE and only 7% in VET.

1 The figures shown in the graph have been calculated by pro-rating the data for 'unknown' sex.

Figure 2: Percentage of ACE and VET students by age group[2], 2001



4.2 Residence

Students from all geographic regions[3] in Australia participate in ACE programs. However, the majority of ACE students come from capital cities or other metropolitan areas.

In general, the residential profile of ACE students reflects that of the Australian population (table 3).

In 2001

- Around 70% of ACE students lived in capital cities or other metropolitan areas. In comparison, 72% of all Australian population resided in these areas. For VET students, this percentage was lower, at around 64%.
- Around 30% of ACE students lived in rural or remote areas, compared to 28% of the Australian population. However, residents of rural and remote areas were slightly better represented in VET, accounting for 36% of students.

Table 3: Percentage of students by geographic region and program type, 2001*

Geographic region	Vocational	Non-vocational	All ACE	All VET	Australian population**
Capital city	54.5	72.0	64.0	56.6	64.2
Other metropolitan	6.7	4.6	5.6	7.5	7.4
Rural/Remote	38.8	23.4	30.4	36.0	28.1
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
Total ('000)	**238.7**	**279.2**	**497.5**	**1,756.8**	**19,157.0**

*Note: The percentages in the table for VET and ACE students have been calculated excluding the data for the 'unknown' and 'overseas' categories.
**Note: Unpublished ABS data, 2001.

2 The figures shown in the graph have been calculated by pro-rating the data for 'unknown' age. Also the age group of 14 years and below, which accounts for a very small number of people, is not shown.

3 This is a classification developed to provide geographic information about students. It is based on mapping the student's residential postcode to the regional classifications adopted by the Department of Primary Industries and Energy (DPIE) and the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST).

Patterns of participation in non-vocational programs for four major geographic regions vary across different training providers (table 4). Students from rural and remote areas were better represented in ACE programs provided by community training organisations than by TAFE and other government providers. In 2001, more than a quarter of all students undertaking non-vocational ACE programs with community providers were from rural or remote areas. This compares with 12% for TAFE and other government providers.

Table 4: Percentage of students in non-vocational programs, by training provider and geographic region, 2001

	TAFE and other government	Community	All
Capital city	85.7	66.6	70.4
Other metropolitan	0.7	5.4	4.5
Rural/remote	12.1	25.7	22.9
Overseas	0.6	0.0	0.1
Unknown	0.9	2.3	2.1
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
Total ('000)	**56.0**	**223.0**	**279.2**

4.3 Educational background

Students who undertake ACE training come from a diverse range of educational backgrounds[4]. Since ACE students are on average older than VET students, their prior education profile is different from VET students. On average, students in ACE are much less likely than those in VET to be still attending secondary school and appear to be more likely to have completed some kind of post-secondary education or training.

In 2001, of all ACE students who provided information on their prior education:

- ◇ only 3%, compared to 11% of VET students, undertook training while still attending secondary school.
- ◇ just under half had completed some kind of post-secondary education prior to starting ACE, compared to around 35% of students in VET.
- ◇ almost 10% had completed a qualification at a degree or postgraduate diploma level before they started ACE, compared to around 6% in VET.
- ◇ under 14% had finished Year 12 as their highest prior education level, in comparison to 24% in VET.

4 The information on the educational background of ACE students presented in this section should be interpreted as indicative only because a high percentage of students did not report their prior education.

As in VET, the bulk of ACE programs in 2001 were delivered at a college or campus (table 5). ACE programs are less likely to be delivered online, through remote access or in employment situations than VET programs.

Table 5: Percentage of annual hours by delivery type and program type, 2001

	Vocational	Non-vocational	All ACE	All VET
College/campus-based	82.6	95.3	86.4	79.5
Online and remote access	1.6	1.1	1.5	3.4
Employment-based	6.3	1.0	4.7	5.2
Other	8.5	2.4	6.7	5.9
Unknown	1.0	0.2	0.8	6.0
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
Total (m)	**14.4**	**6.3**	**20.7**	**377.6**

ACE students are much more likely than VET students to enrol in separate subjects, not a whole course. In 2001, subjects not associated with a course accounted for over 30% of all annual hours undertaken by ACE students, in contrast to 2% in VET (table 6).

Those ACE students who enrol in courses or qualifications have an opportunity to choose from a wide range of fields of study[5]. In 2001, the most popular choices among students in vocational programs were courses or training packages associated with such fields of study as:

- ◇ *VET multi-field education*, designed to provide general skills (e.g., literacy, numeracy, and communication), which accounted for 26% of annual hours
- ◇ *Business, administration and economics* (13% of annual hours)
- ◇ *Health and community services* (11% of annual hours).

Students in non-vocational programs predominantly enrolled in courses associated with such fields of study as:

- ◇ *Art, humanities and social sciences*, which accounted for 21% of all hours and included courses in craft, art, pottery, calligraphy, music, dance and drama, and photography
- ◇ *VET multi-field education* (13% of annual hours)
- ◇ *Health and community services* (11% of annual hours).

Table 6: Percentage of annual hours by field of study and program type, 2001

Field of study	Vocational	Non-vocational	All ACE	All VET
Land and marine resources, animal husbandry	1.6	1.3	1.5	4.7
Architecture, building	0.8	2.2	1.2	6.2
Arts, humanities and social sciences	6.5	21.2	10.9	8.1
Business, administration, economics	13.5	3.0	10.3	19.3
Education	3.8	0.1	2.7	2.0
Engineering, surveying	0.8	2.3	1.2	13.4
Health, community services	10.7	10.8	10.7	9.0
Law, legal studies	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6
Science	6.2	3.2	5.3	9.5
Veterinary science, animal care	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.3
Services, hospitality, transportation	3.6	3.7	3.6	12.1
VET multi-field education	25.9	13.1	22.1	13.1
Subject only – no FOS	26.7	39.0	30.4	1.6
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
Total (m)	**14.4**	**6.3**	**20.7**	**377.6**

5 A field of study is a classification of courses based on the major intended vocational outcome and content

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Competency-based training does not play as important role in ACE as it does in VET, mainly because most ACE programs are designed for students' personal development. In 2001, training packages, which attracted 36% of VET students, accounted for only 6% of students undertaking ACE programs. Almost three quarters of these students were enrolled in *business, information technology, assessment and workplace training*, and *community services*. Also, only 18% of ACE enrolments were in units of competency, in contrast to 38% of VET enrolments.

The programs undertaken by ACE students can lead to different qualifications. However, in non-vocational programs, almost all training activity was associated with non-award courses, i.e. courses that do not lead to any qualification, and enrolments in separate subjects. This training activity accounted for over 90% of all annual hours undertaken by students in non-vocational ACE programs. In vocational ACE, non-award courses and subject-only enrolments accounted for over 14% of annual hours.

Although vocational ACE students enrol in a wide range of qualifications, their qualification profile is very different from that of VET students. Vocational ACE students are less likely to enrol in AQF qualifications and much more likely to enrol in separate subjects not associated with any qualification.

In 2001:

- ◇ AQF or equivalent qualifications accounted for 62% of annual hours in vocational ACE, compared to 89% for VET students.
- ◇ Training activity associated with enrolments in subjects not associated with a course accounted for over a quarter of all annual hours in vocational ACE and only 2% in VET.

Also, vocational ACE students are much less likely than VET students to enrol in courses that lead to higher level qualifications.

In 2001:

- ◇ Around 2% of all annual hours undertaken by students in vocational ACE programs were associated with courses that lead to a diploma or higher level qualification, in contrast to 20% for VET.
- ◇ Around 15% of annual hours in vocational ACE programs were undertaken by students enrolled in courses leading to AQF III or equivalent qualification, compared to 25% for all VET.

Table 7: Percentage of annual hours for vocational ACE and all VET by AQF qualification, 2001

	Vocational ACE programs	All VET
AQF diploma or higher	2.2	20.2
AQF certificate IV or equivalent	8.6	13.4
AQF certificate III or equivalent	14.7	25.5
AQF level unknown*	1.9	1.5
AQF certificate II	21.6	20.9
AQF certificate I	12.7	7.0
AQF senior secondary	0.2	0.3
Other recognised courses	1.2	5.4
Non award courses	10.4	4.2
Subject only – no qualification	26.7	1.6
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**
Total (m)	**14.4**	**377.6**

*Notes:

(1) The analysis of the data shows that the qualifications included in the 'AQF level unknown' category are most likely to be equivalent to AQF level II or III qualifications.

(2) The data on non-vocational programs are not included in this table because most of the non-vocational programs training activity (99.0% of annual hours) is not associated with any qualification

As in VET, some subjects offered to students in the ACE sector can be assessed and, therefore, result in a 'pass' or 'fail'; other subjects are not formally assessed and require only the completion of a specific number of study hours or tasks. Students may also gain credit for subjects by demonstrating their existing knowledge or skills (Recognition of Prior Learning) or by submitting documented evidence of past achievement in the same or an equivalent program (Credit Transfer).

ACE activity is characterised by a high proportion of enrolments in subjects that do not require assessment. In 2001, almost 63% of all ACE enrolments were in non-assessed subjects, and for non-vocational ACE programs it was almost 87%. Most of these subjects were completed. In VET, enrolments in non-assessed subjects made up only 5%.

Subjects that require assessment accounted for under 30% of all ACE enrolments, while in VET they accounted for almost three quarters of enrolments. However, in vocational ACE programs, 47% of all enrolments were in assessed subjects. Of all ACE enrolments in assessed subjects almost 90% resulted in a 'pass', compared to about 86% in VET.

Table 8: Percentage of subject enrolments by subject outcome and program type, 2001

Outcome	Vocational	Non-vocational	All ACE	All VET
Assessed – successful	42.4	3.4	26.0	63.2
Assessed – unsuccessful	4.7	0.8	3.1	10.5
Non-assessed – not completed	1.0	0.3	0.7	0.4
Non-assessed – completed	44.2	86.6	62.0	4.6
Continuing studies	1.9	0.1	1.1	5.5
RPL	1.0	0.1	0.6	2.5
Credit transfer	0.6	0.1	0.4	3.8
Withdrawn	3.5	0.5	2.3	8.4
Not stated	0.7	8.1	3.8	1.3
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
Total ('000)	**563.9**	**408.6**	**972.5**	**13,491.3**

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ISBN 1 74096 138 2 print
ISBN 1 74096 139 0 web
TD/TNC 73.03

Published by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research
252 Kensington Rd, Leabrook SA 5068
PO Box 115 Kensington Park SA 5068
Australia
www.ncver.edu.au

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